

The New Normal Continues

Matt Barton

The phrase “the new normal” is used quite often currently, to the point that it’s becoming clichéd. We use it to describe any disruption to the schedule and customs to which we were familiar. Though many of the instances will prove to only be “one-offs,” there certainly are manners in which our lives and routines will have been amended, if only for a short amount of time. I planned to visit a large bookstore in St. Louis recently, parked my vehicle, walked to the entrance and was greeted with a sign that provided numerous requirements and prohibitions relating to all patrons of the establishment. After complying with these instructions and perusing the store for about 15 minutes, I remarked to the individual who was with me, “I hate the new normal.” Oh well, it was a temporary price to pay for overpriced coffee and scoping out new biographies.

However, the cancellation of the Missouri Agents Connection (MAC) Summit is *not* the new normal. Not by a long shot. While numerous conferences around the nation this year pivoted to a virtual format, we all agree that there is something that such a format lacks: warm human interaction. The 2021 MAC Summit will take place in-person and will offer some of the most beneficial sessions in the event’s history.

I recently traversed the state taking part in the presentation of awards that would have otherwise been presented during the annual MAC Summit that takes place in July. The leadership of the association lent great consideration to the decision of how to handle this year’s awards. Should we forego the awards this year and just present the awards at next year’s MAC Summit? Should we not present the awards this year and instead present both the 2020 *and* 2021 awards at next year’s MAC Summit? If we present the awards for 2020 this year, what is the best manner for those recipients to receive the recognition that they deserve?

In the end, a sense of normalcy was sought and the decision was made to present the awards this year – the correct decision in my opinion. We took great care in planning each award, from the day and time, to the words that would be offered during the presentations, and I want to thank all of those that took part in the live presentations.

If you missed the live presentations, you have no reason to worry. For the first time, the presentations were recorded via Facebook Live and you can view Missouri’s Facebook page to catch the replay of the presentations. Also, make sure you congratulate each of the winners, as these awards are reflective of significant achievement in the careers of each of the winners. This year’s winners were:

E. Ellwood Willard Outstanding Service Award: Doug Clift (Bowersox Insurance Agency, St. Louis)

Insurance Person of the Year: Karen O’Connor Corrigan (O’Connor Insurance Agency, St. Louis)

Company Representative of the Year: Christine Starr (UFG Insurance)

Young Agent of the Year: Grant Bowen (Custom Insurance Services, Crystal City)

Top Partner: Barton Mutual Insurance Company

Speaking of Facebook Live, you may have noticed the “ramp-up” in the association’s social media presence ... that is no accident. It’s a deliberate initiative to make sure MAIA is able to reach as many members of the insurance industry as possible. It’s also a skill set that our interviewing team specifically sought when hiring for the marketing and communications coordinator position on our staff, filled by Amie Conway, who has done a masterful job thus far in the position.

While I am by no means a social media expert (I’m not even a novice), I recognize the value of a strong social media presence from a business standpoint. You will see much more involvement of the association in various social media platforms and I hope that you will join with the association via those platforms to boost the recognition and performance of both the association and your agency or company. I think it’s a perfect example of how a rising tide lifts all boats.